

**I. Love goes the distance for the sake of the gospel**

**A. Paul's examples**

1. Refraining from acceptable "rights"
  - a. Not eating meat
  - b. Not being married
  - c. Not receiving financial support from the churches
  - d. Not maintaining social distinction
2. Apostleship:
  - a. to know Christ personally and personally live like Christ for the sake of the impact of the gospel in the lives of others
  - b. Paul prioritizes the gospel and the mission of God to fill the earth with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord above everything else in life!

**B. Paul's strategy**

1. As part of his argument defining the role of an apostle, Paul establishes the "apostolic right" to support from the churches
2. Paul's use of the right of the servant of the gospel to make his living from the gospel leads to a necessary detour: "Giving, God, the Christian, and the Church"
  - a. Misconception residing in the minds and hearts of many faithful Christians:
    - (1) Christians give to support the ministers and ministries of their church.
    - (2) Reason for the misconception:
      - (a) appeals are often couched in the language of fear:
        - i) if you don't give, we'll go off the air
        - ii) if you don't give, this ministry won't happen
        - iii) if you don't give this person will have to move on, or change their schedule, or sell the jet they get them from one million dollar speaking engagement to another
      - (b) The reason people think that giving is primarily about the success of ministers and ministries is because that is either what we tell them or what we allow them to believe in order to motivate sharing
  - b. Truth:
    - (1) Support is an outcome of giving but it is not the reason we give.
    - (2) Consider this
      - (a) If support was the reason for giving then declining support on Paul's part would undermine the very discipleship he is teaching.

- (b) What does Paul know about giving that allows him to decline this right of support?
- (3) **Christian giving is one of several provisions God makes in the life of a believer that enables the believer to experience a measure of the joy God has in being God.**
  - (a) In other words, for the believer, giving is an act of grace where faith honors God by doing what God does for the reason God does it.
  - (b) **When we give, we have the opportunity to be like God not only in what we do but in why we do it and thereby to share in God's joy in being who He is and doing what He does.**

## II. Giving, God, the Christian, and the Church

### A. Giving is Commanded by God and by Christ and is included in both covenants!

- 1. OT
  - a. **Deuteronomy 15:7–11** *“If among you, one of your brothers should become poor, in any of your towns within your land that the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart or shut your hand against your poor brother, 8 but you shall open your hand to him and lend him sufficient for his need, whatever it may be. 9 Take care lest there be an unworthy thought in your heart and you say, ‘The seventh year, the year of release is near,’ and your eye look grudgingly on your poor brother, and you give him nothing, and he cry to the LORD against you, and you be guilty of sin. 10 You shall give to him freely, and your heart shall not be grudging when you give to him, because for this the LORD your God will bless you in all your work and in all that you undertake. 11 For there will never cease to be poor in the land. Therefore I command you, ‘You shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor, in your land.’*
  - b. “You shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor, in your land.” Why?
    - (1) Because God has opened wide His hand to you
    - (2) Because God has loved you and delivered you from slavery in Egypt and from the poverty of landlessness
    - (3) Because God in love has share bountifully with you
    - (4) And because in this world the purpose of your very existence is to know Him and make Him known as He truly is: generous, compassionate, merciful Provider
- 2. NT
  - a. Jesus
    - (1) **Matthew 5:42 (ESV)** *Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you.*

- (2) Jesus speaks often of giving and the release of personal possessions to the glory of God
  - (a) His response to the rich young ruler
  - (b) His commendation of the widow
  - (c) His observation that mankind cannot serve both God and Money
- b. Paul
  - (1) **2 Corinthians 9:7 (ESV) *Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.***
    - (a) We often make the point that the heart defines the amount of our giving, making giving an act of grace rather than Law
    - (b) But we ought not to rule out the Law of faith, for Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit, instructs, “Each one must give . . .”
  - (2) Giving is an obligation embraced by everyone to whom God has given the gift of His Son, His salvation, and His hope for eternal life in the presence of His glory

**B. Giving is truly authenticated not by obedience or faith, but by love!**

- 1. **1 Corinthians 13:1-3 (ESV) *<sup>1</sup> If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. <sup>2</sup> And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. <sup>3</sup> If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.***
- 2. **Giving is truly of the kind commanded and commended by God when giving bears the character and purpose of God Himself.**
  - a. Self-sacrificing generosity describes the character of God Himself
    - (1) **John 3:16 (ESV) *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.***
    - (2) **Matthew 17:5 (ESV) *He was still speaking when, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him.”***
      - (a) It pleased God to send Him
      - (b) It pleased God to lead Him
      - (c) It pleased God to sacrifice Him
      - (d) It pleased God to raise Him
      - (e) It pleased God to exalt Him
    - (3) All of the implications for “giving” Christ to man as a substitutionary atoning sacrifice for sin, pleased God because “love goes the distance for the gospel!”
  - b. Love for God fulfills the mission of God to fill the earth with the

knowledge of His glory

- (1) When we give of ourselves—whether treasures or talents or time—when we give of ourselves out of love for God and love for others, in that act of love we bear the image of God in the world and do our part to fill the earth with the knowledge of His glory.
- (2) When love motivates giving we serve God as true apostles: knowing God personally and personally living like Him.
- (3) When we give out of love, for love of God and the impact of the gospel on the lives of others, we give like God
- (4) And when we are genuinely like God we are subject to experiencing the very joy God has in being God!
  - (a) **Hebrews 12:2 (ESV) *looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.***
    - i) He gave Himself to faithful obedience, in love, for the sake of joy.
    - ii) **May God make His love and joy so overflow in you that, in giving and living, your love will go the distance for the gospel just as Christ's love does.**